

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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USIE-00 CCO-00 INRE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03 NSC-10

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----- 097745

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FM AMCONGEN BIEN HOA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0001

INFO USDEL FRANCE

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMCONGEN CAN THO

AMCONGEN NHA TRANG

AMCONGEN DANANG

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BIEN HOA 0024

SUBJ: HIGH- RANKING RVN MILITARY DISCREDIT CEASE- FIRE

1. THE RAPID AUGMENTATION OF COMMUNIST MAIN FORCE UNITS WITH RELEASED PRISONERS OF WAR, THE APPARENT UNDETERRED MOVEMENT OF MATERIEL AND MEN FROM THE NORTH INTO THE COSVN AREA (MR3, PARTS OF MR4 AND REGION 5 IN CAMBODIA), THE CONTINUED FIGHTING, AND THE INABILITY OF THE ICCS TO FUNCTION AS REQUIRED BY THE PARIS AGREEMENT ALL CONTRIBUTE TO A GROWING FEELING IN THE III CROPS MILITARY COMMUNITY THAT THE CEASE- FIRE HAS FIALED OR IS ABOUT TO FAIL. SOURCES IN THIS COMMUNITY AS WELL AS OTHERS WHO HAVE CLOSE RELATIONS WITH IT BELIEVE THAT THE COMMUNISTS DO NOT WANT PEACE AND THAT THEY CAN GAIN MORE IN THE LONG RUN BY CONTINUING TO CREATE AN UNSTABLE ATMOSPHERE. THERE ARE OTHERS WHOSE LOYALTY TO THE RVN IN UNQUESTIONABLE WHO TAKE THE POSITION THAT NEITHER SIDE WANTS PEACE AND THAT BOTH SIDES WILL NOT BE SATISFIED UNTIL THE WAR RESUMES. THIS LATTER GROUP SEEMS TO BE CONVINCED THAT THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN THE LAST AMERICAN FIGHTING MAN LEAVES VIET- NAM. EVEN THOSE WHO DO NOT EXPECT A NEW FULL- SCALE
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COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE EXPECT AN INCREASE IN COMMUNIST GROUND PROBES, ATTACKS BY FIRE, HARASSMENT OF OUTPOSTS, AND TERRORISM.

2. THERE IS LIKEWISE A GROWING DISSATISFACTION WITH THE TERMS OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT. THERE ARE EVEN SOME WITHIN THE MILITARY COMMUNITY WHO VIEW THIS AS AN AMERICAN- IMPOSED SETTLEMENT NOT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET- NAM. THEY MAKE THE POINT THAT THE ONLY ENFORCEABLE FEATURES OF THE AGREEMENT ARE THOSE PROVISIONS WHICH DEAL WITH THE RELEASE OF AMERICAN PRISONERS AND THE CORRESPONDING WITHDRAWAL OF AMERICAN TROOPS. THEY BLAME THE AMERICANS

FOR CURRENT PROBLEMS, REFERRING TO THE UNANIMITY REQUIREMENTS IN THE AGREEMENT AS THE ROOT CAUSE. " HOW CAN THIS GOVERNMENT EVER HOPE TO RECONCILE DIFFERENCES WITH THE COMMUNISTS UNDER THAT KIND OF PROCEDURE?"

THEY ASK.

3. BG DAU, THE TALKATIVE AND SHOWY CG OF THE 18 TH ARVN DIVISION, IS PERHAPS THE MOST VOCAL OF THE GROUP WHO WOULD LIKE TO PUT THE ONUS ON THE UNITED STATES FOR THE CURRENT STALEMATE. HE TOLD US THAT THE U. S. HAS FORCED THE RVN TO SWALLOW A LOT OF POISON, BUT THAT THERE WERE LIMITS TO WHAT WOULD BE SWALLOWED. " AMERICANS GIVE MORE AND MORE AWAY AND EXPECT THE PARIS AGREEMENT TO BE RESPECTED," COMMENTED GEN. DAU. HE SAID THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD GIVE NOTHING AWAY AND THAT, IN FACT, COMMUNIST CONTROL OF SUCH AREAS AS LOC NINH, BO DUC, AND NORTHERN TAY NINH IS ONLY TEMPORARY AND HIS GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO RETAKE THEM. GEN. DAU DESCRIBED RVN MILITARY EFFORTS IN THIS REGARD AS " PROTECTIVE REACTION" STRIKES.

4. THE ICCS, FOR THE MOST PART, IS CRITICIZED BY THIS GROUP FOR ITS LACK OF AGGRESSIVENESS IN THE HANDLING OF WHAT THE VIETNAMESE MILITARY CALL LEGITIMATE COMPLAINTS OF COMMUNIST CEASE- FIRE VIOLATIONS. THE INABILITY OF THE ICCS TO STOP (OR OTHERWISE LIMIT) THE FIGHTING COMES IN FOR ITS SHARE OF SCORN AS WELL. EXAMPLES

OF COMMUNIST POST- CEASE- FIRE MILITARY AND TERRORIST ACTIVITIES, IN WHICH INNOCENT CIVILIANS WERE THE VICTIMS, ARE QUICKLY TROTTED OUT TO DEMONSTRATE ICCS INDECISION AND INEFFECTIVENESS. THE TREATMENT ACCORDED THE ICCS BY PROVINCE CHIEFS AND OTHER HIGH RANKING OFFICIALS IS CITED AS EVIDENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S SINCERITY TO WORK WITH THE ICCS IN THE CARRYING OUT OF ITS DUTIES. UNFORTUNATELY, SO THEY SAY, THE COMMUNIST MEMBERS RELY ON THE CONFIDENTIAL

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AMERICAN- IMPOSED UNANIMITY CONCEPT TO STIFLE THE WORK OF THE ICCS.

THIS, THEY ARGUE, IS THE PRINCIPAL REASON FOR THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS IN MILITARY REGION 3.

5. AN INTERESTING REACTION IS OBSERVED AMONG HIGH RANKING RVN MILITARY OFFICERS WHO SPEAK OF RETAKING COMMUNIST- HELD TERRITORY, WHEN REMINDED OF REMARKS PRESIDENT THIEU HAS MADE AT MEETINGS WITH CORP COMMANDERS AND PROVINCE CHIEFS SUPPORTING THE CEASE- FIRE AGREEMENT AND REAFFIRMING RVN INTENTIONS TO MAKE IT WORK. THEY ASSERT THAT THE RVN IS WHOLLY DEPENDENT ON U. S. AID FOR ITS POSTWAR SURVIVAL (IMPLYING THAT THIEU WOULD SAY PUBLICLY WHATEVER WAS NECESSARY TO ENSURE CONTINUED U. S. ASSISTANCE) AND REITERATE THAT COMMUNISTS ARE BANDITS AND YOU CANNOT, AS BG DAU SAYS, " TEACH HONESTY TO A BANDIT."

6. THESE VIEWS ARE BY NO MEANS WIDESPREAD. THEY DO APPEAR TO BE GAINING MOMENTUM, HOWEVER, AS WE ARE STARTING TO HEAR SIMILAR UTTERANCES FROM HIGHLY PLACED CIVILIANS. WHAT IS BEHIND WHAT NOW APPEARS TO BE AN ORCHESTRATED CAMPAIGN TO LAY THE BLAME AT THE DOOR OF THE UNITED STATES IF THE CEASE- FIRE FAILS AND THE WAR RESUMES IS DIFFICULT TO SAY AT THIS TIME. WE CAN ONLY SPECULATE THAT A SEGMENT OF THE MILITARY COMMUNITY IN THIS REGION IS FRUSTRATED AT BEING POWERLESS TO COMBAT THE COMMUNISTS AND THAT THEY ARE DISCREDITING THE CEASE- FIRE AGREEMENT AND ITS ATTENDANT MACHINERY IN THE HOPE THAT THEY MAY BE GIVEN THE GREENLIGHT TO DO WHAT THEY BELIEVE IS THE PROPER STEP TO PEACE: DRIVE THE COMMUNISTS OUT OF SOUTH VIET- NAM WITH WHATEVER IT TAKES TO ACCOMPLISH THAT OBJECTIVE. WALKINSHAW

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